

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8337

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 1291

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR

SUBJ: WHO SPEAKS FOR THE WEST BANK

1. SUMMARY. REPORTS THAT AN INDIGENOUS WEST BANK
ALTERNATE LEADERSHIP TO THE PLO IS A POSSIBILITY
AND THAT HUSSEIN'S INFLUENCE IN THE WEST BANK IS
WAXING HAVE AGAIN BECOME CURRENT IN JERUSALEM.
WE SEE NO EVIDENCE TO SUBSTANTIATE EITHER RUMOR.

2. NO DOUBT REFLECTING IMPRESSIONS THEY HAVE RECEIVED
FROM ISRAELI SOURCES, WE HAVE HAD A RECENT RASH OF
INQUIRIES FROM JOURNALISTS AS TO WHETHER EVENTS IN
LEBANON HAVE CAUSED WEST BANK LEADERS TO THINK IN
TERMS OF CONSTITUTING THEMSELVES AS AN INDIGENOUS
PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN NEW CROP
OF RUMORS THAT HUSSEIN IS ACTIVELY SEEKING TO ENLARGE
HIS INFLUENCE ON WEST BANK. THESE TWO THEMES
APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN COMBINED BY MFA DIRGEN AVINERI
IN NEW YORK RECENTLY WHERE HE REPORTEDLY SAID
EVENTS IN LEBANON WERE CAUSING WEST BANK PALESTINIANS
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TO LOOK ANEW TO AMMAN WHERE THEIR FUTURE (ALLEGEDLY)

LAY.

3. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT PLO REVERSES IN LEBANON HAVE HAD A DEPRESSING EFFECT AMONG WEST BANKERS. COMING AFTER PLO SUCCESSES AT THE UNGA LAST FALL AND AT THE SC IN THE WINTER AND SPRING OF '76, WEST BANKERS ARE BITTERLY SURPRISED OVER PLO-SYRIAN CLASHES AND EVENTS SUCH AS TAL ZAATAR. THE BITTERNESS IS COMPOUNDED BECAUSE, AFTER THE PLO, SYRIA HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN REGARDED ON THE WEST BANK AS THE PALESTINIANS BEST FRIEND.

4. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN SOME LOCAL CRITICISM OF ARAFAT FOR "PERMITTING" THE PLO TO BECOME DIVERTED FROM ITS PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE, THIS SHOULD NOT BE MISREAD THAT AN ALTERNATE WEST BANK LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT TO EMERGE AND/OR THE WEST BANKERS MAY BE WILLING TO RETURN TO THE HASHEMITE FOLD.

5. THERE ARE MANY CONSTRAINTS MILITATING AGAINST THE EMERGENCE OF A WEST BANK ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP TO THE PLO. FIRST AND FOREMOST, BOTH INTELLECTUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, THE PLO IS SEEN BY A MAJORITY OF WEST BANKERS AS THE ONE GROUP WHICH IS DEDICATED TO ENDING THE OCCUPATION. ITS LEADERS AND MEMBERS ARE PALESTINIANS AND THE ORGANIZATION IS LOCALLY PERCEIVED AS NOT BEING SUBSERVIENT TO THE INTERESTS OF ANY PARTICULAR STATE. IN ADDITION, THE RABAT, UNGA AND UNSC DECISIONS HAVE GIVEN THE PLO ADDITIONAL PRESTIGE. THIS RESULTS IN MODERATE WES BANK LEADERS GIVING VOCAL SUPPORT TO THE PLO, "AS OUR REPRESENTATIVE" WHILE STOPPING SHORT OF ACTIVELY CARRYING OUT PLO POLICIES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES.

6. AFTER THE APRIL MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS THE NEW MAYORS UNANIMOUSLY DECLARED THAT THE PLO REPRESENTED THE PALESTINIANS AND UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES COULD THEY BECOME MORE THAN INDIVIDUAL MAYORS SINCE THEY WERE LIVING UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION AND POLITICAL PARTIES AND ACTIVITIES WERE PROHIBITED. FURTHERMORE, ISRAEL
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HAS CONSISTENTLY PREVENTED THE EMERGENCE OF ANYONE THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED A POTENTIAL LEADER OF THE ENTIRE WEST BANK. IF, IN FACT, SOME MEMBERS OF THE GOI WISH TO SEE AN INDIGENOUS WEST BANK ALTERNATIVE TO THE PLO EMERGE (A JUDGMENT FOR EMBASSY TEL AVIV TO MAKE), THE WORK HAS NOT FILTERED DOWN TO THE MILITARY GOVERNOR. RECENTLY, WHEN THE MAYOR OF ANBLUS TRIED TO PRESENT A PROTEST CONCERNING THE VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT), WHICH

WAS SIGNED BY ALL THE WEST BANK MAYORS PLUS
THE MAYOR OF GAZA, THE MILGOV REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT
ON THE GROUND THAT SHAKA' COULD SPEAK ONLY FOR NABLUS
AND NOT FOR ANY LARGER GROUP.

7. ALTHOUGH FRUSTRATED BECAUSE OF 9 YEARS OF ISRAELI
OCCUPATION, THE WEST BANKERS DO NOT FAVOR A RETURN
TO HASHEMITE RULE. A COMMON REFRAIN IS, "WE ARE
PALESTINIANS, WE ARE JORDANIANS. WE WANT OUR OWN
STATE AND NATIONALITY." RUMORS THAT KING HUSSEIN
MIGHT SEEK TO EXPAND HIS INFLUENCE ON THE WEST BANK
MAY HAVE HELPED SPARK THE ANTI-JORDANIAN FLAVOR TO
THE RECENT DEMONSTRATION IN HEBRON. ANOTHER FACTOR
IN THIS SITUATION IS THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT
ISRAEL IS NOT NOW PREPARED TO CONTEMPLATE WITHDRAWING
FROM THE WEST BANK (TO SAY NOTHING OF EAST JERUSALEM),
AND THE RECENT PUBLICATION OF THE ALLON PLAN IN
FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS REGARDED AS A NON-EVENT.

8. IN SPITE OF ITS MISFORTUNES (WISHFUL THINKING NOT
WITHSTANDING) THE PLO STILL SPEAKS FOR A MAJORITY OF
WEST BANKERS.
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